†श्री जलालुदीन अन्सारी: सभापति महोदय, कुम्हरार एक ऐतिहासिक स्मारक है और उसको सुरक्षा प्रदान करना, उसको कायम रखना, यह सरकार का दायित्व है। जहां तक माननीय मंत्री महोदय ने कहा एन्क्रोचमेंट का, तो एन्क्रोचमेंट को हटाने के लिए आप राज्य सरकार से बात कीजिए और यह ठीक है कि वह आज गड्ढे में है, लेकिन आज के युग में पानी निकालना कोई बड़ी समस्या तो नहीं है। आपका विभाग उसको सुरक्षित करवाए, उसमें जो बारिश से पानी आता है उसे हमेशा दूर करवाए और फिर उसकी बाउण्डरी वाल, जिसको कहते हैं घेराबंदी, उसको पक्का करवा दें। यह कोई बहुत बड़ा काम नहीं है, लेकिन आपके विभाग का कोई विशेष ध्यान इस ओर नहीं है और जो राज्य सरकार को ध्यान देना चाहिए अपनी धरोहर को बचाने के लिए, वह भी उस ओर ध्यान नहीं दे पा रही है। इसीलिए हमारा माननीय मंत्री जी से कहना है कि इस ऐतिहासिक स्मारक को बचाने के लिए आप विशेष ध्यान दीजिए और राज्य सरकार से भी आप बात कीजिए कि इसमें वह आपकी आवश्यक मदद करें अन्यथा यह हमारा ऐतिहासिक स्मारक जो बरबाद हो रहा है, वह अगले कुछ दिनों में समाप्त हो जाएगा, जो कि हमारी सभ्यता, संस्कृति और इतिहास के लिए उचित नहीं होगा। इसके लिए आवश्यक कदम उठाए जाएं, यही हम मांग करते हैं।

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: I will take the suggestion of the hon. Member for future improvements.

*186. [*The Questioner (Shri Suryabhan Patil Vahadane) was absent. For answer, vide page 25 Infra.*]

Procurement of on Track Ballast Cleaning Machine

*187. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item titled "Jessop denied Rail machine orders" which appeared in the Statesman dated 31st October, 1999, regarding procurement of On Track Ballast Cleaning Machine costing Rs. 120 crores.

(b) whether any enquiry has been instituted into the alleged rejection of the lowest offer of Messrs Jessop, a public sector undertaking;

(c) if so, the details as to how the lowest offer was rejected; and

†Transliteration of the speech in Persian Script is available in the Hindi version of the Debate.

(d) if not, whether orders are being placed on Jessop, as the lowest bidder?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir. However, the value of the contract is Rs. 53.40 crores & not Rs. 120 crores.

(b) and (c) The issue was examined in detail. However, the offer of M/s. Jessop & Co. Ltd. for supply of ballast cleaning machine in collaboration with M/s. MTH. Praha of Czech Republic was not conforming to the specifications incorporated in the tender document and so the order was not placed on them.

(d) Recently global tender for 4 similar machines has been opened in which M/s. Jessop have participated. Railways will encourage PSUs for indigenous procurement of these machines.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think it is very clear that this question pertains to M/s. Jessop which is a public sector unit. It is sick. It is situated in West Bengal.

It is clear from the statement that the value of the contract is Rs. 53.40 crores and not Rs. 120 crores. The tenders were in two parts—one in March and the other in October. Part (a) of my supplementary is whether this contract for Rs. 53.40 crores is for ten machines or for six machines. Why was the tender divided into two parts? We know that, if there is a bulk purchase, it may lead to some kind of price reduction and savings for the Railways.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: I appreciate what the hon. member has said. The reply to part (a) is that the tender was for six machines, and the reply to part (b) is that it is because of the fund availability in the budget. Whenever we purchase a machine, a provision for that must be included in the budget.

For 1998-99, the provision was for six machines. If we procure any machine its provision should figure in the budget. That is why this is the first phase. In the second phase our offer is for four machines. It is not together. Six are for 1998-99, and four for 1999-2000.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: I think it is very clear from the reply itself that, perhaps, there is scope for rescheduling this kind of small things which may lead to some saving for the Railways, for which, we understand that Madam Minister is very insistent.

Another very glaring difficulty with the reply is that the bid of M/s. Jessop has been negated on technical grounds. Normally, for tenders we have two-part bids. First, there is a technical bid and, subsequently, there is a cost bid. The procedure is that only when the technical bid has been cleared, the cost bid is opened. But, from the reply of the hon. Minister, it appears, though the bid by M/s. Jessop was rejected on tehnical ground, the cost bid had been simultaneouly opened. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister would go into this and find out why this kind of a very blatant violation from the procedure has taken place.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Sir, M/s. Jessop is from Calcutta and we want to help them. I appreciate their concern. But the problem arises when we require something else. This is a very improtant machine and is not available everywhere. There are only few manufacturers of this machine. Actually, nine companies purchased the tender forms, but only two companies—M/s. Jessop & Co. Ltd. with M/s. Praha of Czech Republic, and the other company in collaboration with an Austrian company submitted the tenders. There were some technical shortcomings. These machines are needed for clearing the ballast in concrete sleepers. Concrete sleeper is a very heavy job. It is not possible for human beings to clean the ballast there. That is why we need these machines. What the hon. Member says is that if they had been taken together, we could have saved time. I appreciate that. Becuase of the Budget constraints, there are some problems. But, for the future, we would keep this in mind so that the time is not wasted.

The second point made by the hon. Member was about the lowest bid offered by M/s. Jessop & Co. Yes, cost-wise they had given the lowest bid, but there are certain technical requirements to be met by these machines. These machines had to meet the requirement of handling the track maintenance involving safety and reliability of the work. M/s. Jessop & Cos'. machines did not meet those requirements. If those requirements had not been met, the purpose of purchasing the machines would have been defeated. At that time M/s. Jessop & Co. was not able to meet those requirements. This time, they said that they would be able to meet those requirements, That is why I said, that their case was under consideration.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, my point is that the technical bid and the cost bid were opened simultaneouly. The normal procedure is that the technical bid is cleared first. Only then we go to the cost bid. It had been done simultaneously. This was a violation of the normal procedure. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister would investigate why this violation took place.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Sir, when an hon. Member makes some complaint, I have to look into it. But my point is that we have got a tender committee consisting of exective directors. The point is that if there was any specific complaint, it should have been made before the finalisation of the tender. Of course, we had received letters from the hon. Minister of Industries Shri Sikander Bakht and Shri Dipankar Mukherje, M.P. but it was after the finalisation of the tender. That is why it was difficult for my predecessor to look into that complaint. If we had received the complaint before the finalisation of the tender, we could have done something. I am sorry, my predecessor had received that letter of complaint after the tender was accepted and finalised. If the lacuna had been pointed out before that, we could have looked into.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Sir, we find a lacuna in the hon. Minister's reply. During our visit to about ten or twelve PSUs last year, we got the complaint from most of the PSUs that the Railways and other sister PSUs do not place orders on other PSU which are sick. In this case also, the Minister has said that this was not conforming to the procedure. I would like to know, what efforts were made by the railways to sit down with M/s. Jessop & Co. Ltd.—its sister concern—to find out as to why they could not meet those specifications. If they can do it now, they could probably have done it earlier also. But actually no efforts had been made by the Railways to help M/s. Jessop & Co. in this matter.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Sir, I have a great respect for the hon. Member, but the problem is what he has said is not true. I have personally instructed the officials of Railways that these PSUs like M/s. Jessop & Co. of Calcutta, M/s. Burn Standard, Breithwaite and other public sector undertakings should get most of the orders.

But you must appreciate that there are some procedures in tender matters also which a company has to fulfill. Whatever requirements we need, they have to fulfill them. Please realise that whatever we can do for M/s. Jessop

and Co. Ltd., Calcutta, we are doing. But they have to meet the technical requirements. For example, we took rails from SAIL; and there were some difficulties. They said, "We want to rectify them". They have rectified them. This time we said, "Yes, we are giving you orders." Day before yesterday, we gave so many orders to the public sector units. Our intention is very clear that we have to encourage our public sector undertakings. There is no dispute about that. But, at the same time, they should be competent.

SHRT GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like the Railway Minister to kindly look into the crux of the problem. It is well known that she has a compassion for Bengal industries. But the point is, there were two firms which have made a bid. One was by M/s. Jessop and Co. Ltd., in collaboration with a foreign company; and another was from Austria. Why was the bid of M/s. Jessop & Co. Ltd., rejected? If it has been said that it was of an inferior quality, who has made the evaluation? Is the Railway Minister quite sure that the evaluation was done on merit, not on other considerations? There is a persistent allegation that while placing orders even by the Government companies they discriminate against the public sector undertakings.

This is particularly relevant with regard to the Department to which my hon. friend belongs. This is an inherited liability that she has got. Therefore, I would like to know from her: Why was it rejected? If it was an inferior specification, who has made the evaluation? Since she is having compassion for M/s. Jessop & Co. Ltd., why didn't the authorities sit with them to find out and correct the specifications?

I am putting this supplementary specifically because the Railway Minister, in her second reply stated, "They have already participated; and Railways will encourage." The Railways encouraged them in the second bid because of her compassion. Why was her compassion found wanting in the first bid?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The time is running out. She will not be able to reply.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, if I understood the hon. Member's first question correctly, I would like to inform him that, at that time, I was not in this Department. It is a continuing process. The Tender Committee examines each tender in detail. When a particular company—after getting the tender—cannot fulfil the requirement of 66-67 per cent, how

could they ask, "Please give the order to us." ...(*Interruptions*)... We rely upon them. We rely upon our public sector undertakings. But the problem is, when we asked them, "Will you undertake this order? Will you complete this work?", they said, "First, you give us the tender." If 66 to 67 per cent....

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Are you satisfied with what has been done by your Department?

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: There are some procedures in every Department. That is why I am telling you, if you have a good suggestion, you can give it to the Tender Committee.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: I want you to inquire into the whole thing.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: If you have a good suggestion, you can give it to us. I welcome suggestions and views from Members of Parliament on this issue. I want to tell you that this particular company, M/s. Plasses has supplied 1002 machines to 60 countries.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: They may be a good company. But the rejection was wrong. Will you kindly inquire into it?

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: If the rejection is wrong ....(*interruptions*)... Of course, I always appreciate....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Expenditure on Health

*183. Miss Saroj Khaparde: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cases of acute respiratory infection, diarrhoea, malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy reported in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998. State-wise;

(b) the Plan priorities of Government so far as health sector is concerned; and

(c) the percentage of GDP as well as total Plan outlay and Central and State Budgets spent on health during the last five years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI N.T. SHANMUGAM): (a) The number of cases